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ABSTRACT

This report examines the issues surrounding working fathers and the changing expectations of fatherhood that are creating the necessity for changes in the workplace. Issues examined include the following: (1) fathers are torn between employers expecting super employees and mothers expecting super fathers; (2) a few companies are taking note of the needs of fathers and are making policy changes to ease the conflict; (3) although more companies have paternity leave today, few fathers take advantage of more than a few days of it; (4) more fathers are taking a little time off around the birth of a child; (5) employees would like flexible time arrangements to provide a better balance between work and home life; and (6) awareness has grown, but a revolution in work policies is not expected. The report contains case studies of four companies that are especially sensitive to the needs of working fathers, explaining how their policies have been implemented. An appendix summarizes results of Catalyst's survey on policies for fathers. A 30-item bibliography concludes the document. (KC)

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The BNA Special Report Series on
WORK & FAMILY

Special Report #18 June 1989

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The 1990s Father: Balancing Work & Family Concerns

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INTRODUCTION

You've heard it all before:

The employee needs the day off to stay home with a sick child.

The employee needs the morning off to attend a child's school play.

The employee needs to leave at 5 p.m. on the dot to make it home in time to relieve the babysitter.

And, finally...The employee wants to work part-time for a few years while the children are young, so they do not spend so much time in the care of a substitute parent.

Yes, you've heard it all before. The only difference is, the employee is a man.

Expected by employer to be superemployee and expected by Mom to be superdad, it is no wonder that fathers of the 1980s—like their female counterparts—are feeling torn in both directions, and stressed out in the middle.

Gone are the days of Ozzie and Harriet when Mom was at home running the household and Dad brought home the bacon, had dinner (sometimes) with the family, and then relaxed while Mom cleaned up the kitchen and put the kids to bed.

With only 3.7 percent of American families today made up of a working father and stay-at-home mother, and more than half of all women with children younger than six in the workforce, the scenario is more likely to be: Both Mom and Dad rushing home to get dinner on the table, "quality time" worked in, and bath and bedtime for the kids, before Mom and Dad collapse, exhausted from another day of trying to make it through work and family demands.

Fathers Are Torn

So where has all this left Dad? Expected by employer to be superemployee and expected by Mom to be superdad, it is no wonder that fathers of the 1980s—like their female counterparts—are feeling torn in both directions, and stressed out in the middle.

But unlike the working mother, who stirs up sympathetic images of a woman trying to be all things to all people in her life, the working father evokes no such sympathetic images. People expect a father to work, and now more and more people expect the father to be intimate-

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ly involved in his children's lives. Perhaps more significantly, the father himself now often wants to be more involved with his children and is not willing to give that up for the sake of his work.

"My main bottom line is, it's an evolution, not a revolution....But there has been a gradual increase in men's participation in their children's lives. There is no men's movement, or father's movement, comparable to the women's movement...But that doesn't mean nothing's happening," said James Levine, director of the Fatherhood Project at Bank Street College of Education in New York.

A smattering of fatherhood seminars, a small increase in the number of men taking parental leave, and a lot of talk are indications that many men are beginning to question their traditional working role, experts told BNA.

In this report, BNA interviewed experts on changes affecting work, family, and fathers today. The report also looks at four employers that are paying attention to the fathers in their work force: Merck & Co., NCNB Corp., the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and Du Pont Co.

Appendix materials for this report are "Policies for Fathers," reprinted by permission of Catalyst from the report, *The Corporate Guide to Parental Leaves,* and a bibliography of related articles.

This special report is the 18th in a series produced by the BNA Special Projects Unit. Drew Douglas, managing editor for special projects, coordinated the report. Publishing consultant Marcy Swerdlin wrote this report. Staff editor Steven Teske served as copy editor. Staff researcher Loretta Kotzin served as production editor. Karen Cargill, editorial assistant in the Special Projects unit, and Marilyn M. Bromley, online services librarian in the BNA Library, prepared the bibliography.

People expect a father to work, and now more and more people expect the father to be intimately involved in his children's lives.

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FATHERHOOD 1989

If we have this same discussion [about the working father] 10 years from now, it's hardly going to seem like a revolution took place, but it's not going to seem as newsworthy as it does now.

—James Levine, Director, Fatherhood Project

On the last Father's Day in the 1980s, many young fathers are redefining their role vis-a-vis their work and their family, and companies are just beginning to examine the issue of accommodating fathers.

"Fathers still define themselves primarily in the family as the provider," but in addition they're saying they want to be with the kids, said Stephen Segal, president of Family Partners, a Philadelphia firm developing products for working families. Mothers still see themselves "by and large as responsible for the home, but in addition, they're saying, 'I want to work.' Both are moving, in different directions, toward the center."

"Fathers still define themselves primarily in the family as the provider," but in addition they're saying they want to be with the kids...

From 1981 to 1985, Segal's former company, Resources for Parents at Work, conducted seminars for working parents that drew several thousand people. Such firms as Bankers Trust Co., Exxon, and Philip Morris hired Segal to do in-house training programs for men and women focusing on particular ages of children and the problems facing parents. A special session was offered for fathers only.

Awareness, Not Action

"My own perspective is that while there's been a tremendous amount of awareness around working parents...the awareness by and large has not translated into practice yet," Segal said.

"Both fathers and mothers want to be involved significantly on both fronts [work and family]. The desire is there...But the kinds of support in terms of social and psychological support that are required, by and large are not there," Segal said.

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"Fathers are connecting with their kids, their young kids, in a stronger way, and there are expectations for them to connect in a stronger way than their fathers had, and that sets up the conflicts for the father as he moves through his career," said Segal, who has three children, ages 14, 12 and 8. He worked part-time until his eldest was 5.

The issues, he said, become fitting the expectations men shouldn't get too involved with their kids with a feeling that their first responsibility is to the family. All of this adds up to conflicts with work, Segal said, because it's "not altogether socially acceptable for men to stay home when their kids are sick and such."

Companies Taking Note

Companies increasingly are thinking about working fathers, according to Levine of the Fatherhood Project. In the last three months, for example, he has done seminars on fatherhood for Time Inc., American Express and Ortho Pharmaceutical.

In the seminars, which Levine said are a good first step toward understanding the working father issue, he sometimes does exercises to help participants examine their own lives as working fathers.

There's the guilt issue: "We tend to think working moms have a monopoly on guilt, but it's not true," said Levine, the father of two children ages 18 and 14.

Fathers want to be with their kids, but they're feeling "tremendous pressure" at work, he said. "They're feeling that they're repeating the same pattern of their own fathers, not being around enough." On top of that, "they're feeling pressure from their wives to get involved with their children, but 'do it my way.' "

The Fatherhood Project, formed in 1981, conducts research and seminars on fatherhood and acts as a national clearinghouse on the issue. It currently is updating its 1984 book, *Fatherhood U.S.A.: The First National Guide to Programs, Services, and Resources For and About Fathers*. The new resource guide should be published later this year, Levine said.

"A large part of my role is to get people to discuss these things openly, so that men who might not be talking about these things see that others are," Levine said.

All of this adds up to conflicts with work, Segal said, because it's "not altogether socially acceptable for men to stay home when their kids are sick and such."

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Very Early Stages

Some companies are in the "very early stages" of thinking about the impact of work and family concerns on their male employees. "Most attempts at family-friendly policies have been aimed at women. Companies are just starting to realize that there are guys in this position too," Levine said. And sometimes it's "the guy in the high position who is feeling it personally."

Flexible benefit plans at most companies are open to men as well as women. But what needs to be studied is what keeps men from using these policies, Levine said. According to Levine, no national numbers exist on how many men take advantage of flextime, part-time work or any of the other flexible work arrangements.

Barney Olmsted, co-director of the San Francisco-based New Ways to Work, said it seems more men are using alternative work schedules and taking some time off around the birth of a child than in the past. A generation ago, she said, men did not stay home when their children were born. "It never would have occurred to me or my friends that that was even possible."

... it seems more men are using alternative work schedules and taking some time off around the birth of a child than in the past. A generation ago... men did not stay home when their children were born.

But today Olmsted said she's convinced more men will take paternity leave if it is offered. "It will top off at some point," she said, but to get the ball rolling, "they need a few role models."

Men Not Immune

"Men are not immune to the problems associated with combining work and family life," according to a research paper recently presented by Ellen Galinsky and Dana Friedman, co-presidents of the Families and Work Institute. More than half of working men have wives who work, and working parents comprise about 40 percent of the workforce, Galinsky and Friedman said.

They cited a study done by AT&T that found that, among employees with children under 18, 73 percent of the men and 77 percent of women had dealt with family issues while at work. AT&T also

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found that 25 percent of the men and 48 percent of the women spent "unproductive time at work because of child care issues."

Men also are participating more in housework, according to other studies cited by Galinsky and Friedman. One study, for example, found that men were doing 30 percent of the work in 1986, up from 20 percent in 1980. Another found that 53 percent of the men with children aged six to 12, compared with 62 percent of the women, said they shared child care responsibilities equally. Yet another study found that 36 percent of men and 46 percent of women using out-of-home child care reported stress associated with that care.

A paper on child care and productivity prepared by Galinsky in March for the Child Care Action Campaign said women at the highest and lowest job levels had the most work/family conflicts, while "for men, the lower the income, the more likely they were to have conflict. Likewise, studies have found that lower paid employees, particularly men, are more likely to have child care related absenteeism."

A possible explanation for this is that men in lower-income families take on more child care responsibilities, Galinsky said.

Supervisor Sensitivity

Another issue experts point to is the need for supervisors to be sensitive to work and family conflicts. Research by Bank Street College has found that "having a non-supportive supervisor is predictive of greater work/family conflict," according to Galinsky.

For a long time, women thought that women had to be the solution to work and family issues, according to Fran Rodgers, president of Massachusetts-based Work/Family Directions. But now there is much more balancing and sharing between men and women of family responsibilities.

Many men are joining women in beginning to seek a balance between work and family responsibilities, Rodgers said. They don't want to work overtime, they don't want to relocate, and they don't want their performance measured in terms of hours put in on the job. "The intensity of the feelings is greater for women, but they're there for both" men and women, she said.

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Progressive companies are providing the same flexible benefits for men and women, Rodgers said. Whether the corporate culture has reached the point where men can really take advantage of the policies often "depends on your boss or your unit."

There is a "little bit more pressure" from men to see changes made for family reasons, Rodgers said, but overall there is a "huge difference" between the family man 35 or younger and his older colleagues.

A Different Generation

Some men want to pare down their 60-hour weeks to more manageable 30- or 40-hour weeks. For both men and women, "part-time work is probably the major thing that needs to happen," Burud said.

"This generation is a different kind of male," according to Sandra Burud, president of Burud & Associates, Inc., a child care benefits consulting firm in Pasadena, Calif. Fathers today "want to be more involved with their children." And as their wives start to earn more, the men will be able to afford to do this. "That will determine it," Burud said.

But it still is "not safe for men to talk about their desires" when it comes to work and family concerns, Burud said. Some men want to pare down their 60-hour weeks to more manageable 30- or 40-hour weeks. For both men and women, "part-time work is probably the major thing that needs to happen," Burud said.

Burud sees men getting more involved in child care, both at home and in transporting their children to day care. "As more companies have child care centers, it's becoming more often that men are taking their kids" back and forth, she said.

Information and referral services are especially good for helping men to get involved, Burud said. Also helpful are support groups and consulting services through employee assistance plans. "Men are having a difficult time making the switch from breadwinner" to being a dad of the '80s, "just like women are having trouble with switching their roles," Burud said.

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Not Just A Women's Issue

Balancing work and family responsibilities is becoming a total work force issue, not just a women's issue, Burud said.

Carol Ann Rudolph, president of Child Care Management Resources, a Bethesda, Md.-based consulting firm, sees increasing similarities between men and women in the work and family area.

Men are spending more time with their kids, and men and women are sharing the time they're staying home with sick children, she said. More men are taking their children to the pediatrician, and more are handling the transportation to and from day care centers, she said. But when child care arrangements break down, it still is the woman who misses work more often than the man, Rudolph said.

Men as well as women want to be able to work at home and have flexible hours, although men don't seem to be as interested in part-time work as women do, according to Rudolph. Then again, men, especially those in top positions, probably have always had more flexibility in their jobs than the female secretary who has less job security, she said.

Isolated Cases

Another authority, Patricia Divine Hawkins, child care specialist with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, sees the father issue being addressed by companies in only a few isolated cases.

There are the anecdotes – her stockbroker took a month paternity leave and worked some at home during that time – but overall, she said, "I don't see it."

While "fathers are becoming more interested in having fatherhood become a major part of their daily lives, I don't see the corporate atmosphere that is amenable to it," Hawkins said. "You either have to be in a very senior position where you can call your own shots, or be a specialist" like the stockbroker.

While "fathers are becoming more interested in having fatherhood become a major part of their daily lives, I don't see the corporate atmosphere that is amenable to it...You either have to be in a very senior position where you can call your own shots, or be a specialist" like the stockbroker.

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Companies are starting to give men and women equal treatment in terms of flexible policies, but "very few offer maternity leave, and even fewer offer paternity leave," she said. "The attitudes I hear young men expressing are more of a kind of an awakening period...there's not much happening."

But according to Levine, "fathers are being brought into the discussion in a serious way. That will unfold in a much more serious way in the 1990s."

Parental Leave

Two small-scale studies of parents, one in fall 1987 and the other one year later, found that the number of fathers taking time off from work following the birth of a child is increasing.

In the first study, which queried 40 mothers of preschool children, 55 percent said their husbands had taken time off from work, averaging 5.6 working days, when their last child was born. A year later, when 44 fathers of preschool children were surveyed, 93 percent of the fathers said they had taken off an average 6.6 days after the birth of their child.

Two small-scale studies of parents... found that the number of fathers taking time off from work following the birth of a child is increasing.

These studies were conducted by Joseph Pleck, Henry Luce professor of families, change and society at Wheaton College in Norton, Mass. Pleck said he plans to follow up the studies with a spring 1990 survey of fathers closer to the time their children are born. This survey, like his other two, will be conducted in the southeastern Massachusetts area.

"My overall conclusion is that the message about paternity leave...is that while there is a relatively large number of companies with paternity leave, hardly any fathers take advantage of it," Pleck said.

Short-Term Leave Prevalent

"At the same time, quite a large proportion of fathers are taking short amounts of time off at the time of the birth of their children."

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To some extent, Pleck said, they can do this because they have sick and vacation time available. "The reality is that for a lot of workers who don't schedule their own days off, taking a sick day is kind of a big deal," Pleck said.

In fact, in his fall 1987 survey, 14 percent of the mothers reported that the fathers had taken some paid sick days, and 28 percent said some had taken paid vacation after the birth of their children. Pleck did not ask this question in his 1988 survey.

Instead, men usually take off a day or two upon the birth of a child and call the time vacation, personal, or family crisis leave, according to Catalyst.

Leave Not Publicized

The last national study of paternity leave, published by Catalyst in 1986, showed that 114 firms, or 37 percent of 384 surveyed, offered unpaid leave for new fathers. But, Catalyst found, 90 percent of the companies offering this benefit called it personal leave and did not publicize its availability for new fathers.

In addition, as pointed out by Pleck and other experts, Catalyst found that "very few men" use parental leave. Instead, men usually take off a day or two upon the birth of a child and call the time vacation, personal, or family crisis leave, according to Catalyst.

The research organization suggested several reasons for this, including that the availability of parental leave may not be made clear to employees; that men aren't sure how they could care for a new baby; and that men often fear that taking parental leave could hurt their careers.

When Catalyst asked the companies how much parental leave was "reasonable" for men to take, 62.8 percent said none, and 17.4 percent said no more than two weeks.

A similar survey done today would find even more companies offering parental leave to fathers, Pleck said, and "My sense is that's going to increase."

Company Size Determines Policy

The bigger the company, the more likely it is to offer parental leave, Pleck said. If you looked at the Dow 30, for example, it would

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be 100 percent, and if you looked at the Fortune 500, it would be maybe 80 percent, Pleck said. "But as the company gets smaller," the less likely it will be to offer parental leave to fathers.

His "overall conclusion is that surprisingly, although longer kinds of leave are offered, a large proportion of fathers, in a very sort of quiet and underground way, are taking short periods of time off following the birth of a child."

"Short periods of time off, that's where the action is," he concluded. The reasons for this are several: There is indeed still a stigma attached to men taking time off to be with their children; plus, there are economic concerns – if the father takes off, he loses pay.

When fathers take longer periods of time, he said, it's generally for a special situation, such as health of the mother or gaps in child care.

The Economic Issue

Some also question whether it's really necessary for both parents to be home for extended periods after the birth. A two-worker couple is probably already losing one income and probably can't afford to lose the other, Pleck said.

As it is, with large numbers of men taking off an average a week and a half, they are there for that initial adjustment period, a time together that both mothers and fathers consider important and valuable, Pleck said.

When fathers take longer periods of time, he said, it's generally for a special situation, such as health of the mother or gaps in child care.

Although Pleck said he couldn't document it, he strongly feels that the high proportion of fathers taking short periods of time off is a "relatively recent phenomenon."

Pleck's prediction for the 1990s is that "it will become the dominant pattern for fathers to take one to two weeks off and that the proportion of fathers who take longer periods of time off will grow, but at a slow rate, and it will not become the majority pattern."

"It is one of our social trends...for fathers to be more involved in the family and in the raising of their children," Pleck said. This growth in fathers taking time off to be with their new babies "is just one manifestation of this trend," he said, and a logical outgrowth of the dramatic change in the participation levels of fathers in childbirth.

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In just 10 years, the percentage of fathers present for the birth of their children has soared from 0 to 95 percent, he said, and this is "really dominant, not just in the upper middle class."

When Pleck's first child was born nearly two years ago, he said, he negotiated a three-week leave, which he said was great, but "more would have been better."

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MERCK & CO., INC.

At Merck & Co., Inc., men are taking advantage of work and family programs as much as women, with one exception – parental leave, according to Art Strohmer, executive director of human resources.

At the company's child care centers, for example, "it's my impression that there are as many, if not more, men dropping off children," Strohmer said. And at the company's Family Matters workshops, participants often are evenly split between men and women, he said.

"The whole work and family issue is by no means a women's issue anymore," said Strohmer. With all the dual career families, men are getting as involved as women in this area, he said.

Similar Interests Expressed

"We're beginning to hear males saying similar things as women have: 'I'm not that interested in geographical moves because I don't want to uproot my kids'; 'I'm interested in flextime...' "

Sixty-two percent of Merck's 17,000 U.S. employees are men, many of whom are considering how their jobs affect their families, Strohmer said. "We're beginning to hear males saying similar things as women have: 'I'm not that interested in geographical moves because I don't want to uproot my kids'; 'I'm interested in flextime,' " Strohmer said.

In fact, Strohmer said, family concerns are becoming a larger factor in men's decisions not to move for a new job. And, he said, as many men as women use flextime at Merck.

Likewise, he said, men use the firm's child care resource and referral program to a great degree. And while husband or wife is allowed to use the program, Strohmer said it is his impression that men are making the calls, and "men are finding the child care."

Parental Leave

Parental leave was extended to men a decade ago at Merck. The provision allows men and women to take up to six months unpaid

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leave while continuing full benefits and seniority, and having their job held for them. Employees can opt to take another 12 months after that with full benefits, although the company only will promise such employees return to a job at a similar level.

Nonetheless, only about 10 men have used the parental leave provision, and only one has taken the full six months, according to Strohmer. Many more men probably are taking off time upon the birth of a child, but most likely are taking vacation time since that is paid leave.

Increase In Leave Expected

Strohmer expects to see a "small increase" in the number of paternity leaves. "I don't think it will really ever snowball, not due to the perception problems of men taking leave, but due to economic factors."

It's a practical consideration that most men simply cannot afford to take that kind of leave without pay, Strohmer said. And, he added, there is, after all, "still some stigma attached" to men taking paternity leave.

Family Issues Seminars

And, he added, there is, after all, "still some stigma attached" to men taking paternity leave.

For the past three years, Merck has sponsored lunchtime seminars on such family issues as dealing with teenage or preschool children, the problems of infancy, and elder care. The seminars, held at corporate headquarters in Rahway, N.J., and at the pharmaceutical firm's West Point, N.Y., location, are limited to 15 participants each and have drawn several hundred participants – equally split between males and females – since they began, Strohmer said.

When a child is sick, Strohmer said, he suspects that women still are the ones to stay home more often than men. But, he pointed out, this is becoming a situation of who has what job, rather than a gender issue. At Merck, employees must take a personal leave or vacation day to stay home with a sick child.

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Individual Needs Issues

Strohmer said the company is looking at a sick child-policy. Merck also is contemplating establishing a resource and referral service for elder care, he added.

These work and family issues are becoming issues of individual needs, and often are not gender related, Strohmer said. Companies are attempting to respond to individual lifestyles and individual needs, Strohmer said, "and the sooner that happens, the sooner there will be true equity."

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NCNB CORP.

At NCNB Corp., a bank holding company based in Charlotte, N.C., that also has a long list of work and family programs, "the only thing that's happening is that one man took a two-week paternity leave," according to Karen Geiger, NCNB vice president and career development director. The employee, the only NCNB man to take advantage of parental leave so far, is a vice president on the fund management floor, a fairly heavily male dominated area, Geiger said.

Despite the fact that men are not rushing to take paternity leave, Geiger sees many positive signs in men's attitude toward family. They are "a lot more permissive in how they feel in just talking about it. Men drop by and talk about equity at home more."

Eventually, she said, "it will be seen as a normal thing" for men to take time off to be with their families.

What's Acceptable

Eventually, she said, "it will be seen as a normal thing" for men to take time off to be with their families. But first, we'll see men taking paternity leave for some logistical reason, like a gap between when their wives return to work and the au pair arrives in town. Taking the leave for a logistical reason "is still more acceptable than doing it just because he wants to be with the baby," said Geiger, a full-time working mother with two boys ages 2 and 4.

NCNB also has one man working four days a week – but four 10-hour days – because he commutes from Asheville, N.C., and wants to spend an extra day with the family that he doesn't want to uproot. Lots of men take "piecemeal time" off for family reasons, Geiger said, plus anyone can arrange to work at home sometimes, arrangements which she may be unaware of.

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Mostly Female Firm

NCNB, like the rest of the banking industry, is predominantly female. Just a fourth of the 15,000 employees in its Southeastern banks are male, although half of the officers are men, Geiger said.

Geiger said she "absolutely" has seen a change in men in recent years, particularly in the level of understanding about dual career couples with children. "My boss has a working wife and two kids, and I just tell him that I have to go home because of a babysitter problem, and he understands." This understanding makes NCNB "a nice place to work."

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L.A. DEPT. OF WATER AND POWER

One employer making an effort to do something especially for men is the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP). This utility, the largest municipally owned utility in the United States, has close to 11,000 employees, 80 percent of whom are male, according to Beverly King, director of human resources.

In a 1984 employer survey, DWP found that many men expressed interest in child care, King said. This made the utility realize that work and family issues concerned both men and women.

DWP subsidizes employees who use two nearby child care centers to bring the cost "down to an affordable level," King said. In addition, another 350 DWP children have been placed in day care centers near their own homes through the utility's resource and referral service.

King said "increasing numbers" of fathers tour the child care centers without their wives, and these men are "clearly making the decision on what the nature of their child care should be." The child care directors find that men have different kinds of questions than women touring the centers have, questions about late charges and what kind of notice the centers need if the parent will be working late, but also the men have more questions about child safety and the steps taken in an emergency situation, according to King.

King said "increasing numbers" of fathers tour the child care centers without their wives, and these men are "clearly making the decision on what the nature of their child care should be."

Men's Questions Differ

While the mothers tend to ask more general questions on curriculum, DWP fathers – many of whom are engineers – ask more precise information on how many minutes, for example are spent on motor skills or in creative learning, King said.

And about 750 parents – evenly split between men and women – regularly attend parenting classes held for the past three years in work sites before and after work. The classes, held four times a month, are on such topics as "Back-to-School Blues" and "Is There Life After Teenagehood?"

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This year DWP is hosting a Father's Day luncheon for which 50 people signed up a month in advance. Normally, King said, 25 people sign up for a given small-group session. The luncheon, an offshoot of a program the utility has for expectant families, will feature a speaker on fathering, King said.

The parenting classes also include sessions on parenting for fathers after divorce, and there are single fathers' programs as well, she said.

In the expectant parents program that DWP offers, "fathers are carrying through on the program as well as mothers." In this program, DWP parents are told about company benefits that will be of interest to them as parents. One hundred people attended the most recent program, King said.

DWP offers parental leave without pay of up to one year for natural or adoptive parents, during which time the employee retains his position and his benefits, although he must pick up the cost of the benefits.

In the past year, King said, two fathers have taken the paternity leave, one for two months and one for three months. But, she said, she does not anticipate an increase in fathers taking this sort of leave.

Few Use Parental Leave

In the past year, King said, two fathers have taken the paternity leave, one for two months and one for three months. But, she said, she does not anticipate an increase in fathers taking this sort of leave.

"The trend for workers in general is to utilize the existing child care" rather than take lengthy leaves for parenting, King said. Mothers are returning to work two months after birth on the average, and "the availability of quality infant care has been a substantial factor in returning people to the workplace," King said.

But, she added, both fathers and mothers are visiting the infants they place in the DWP-subsidized child care during the work day.

DWP, like many companies, is experiencing something of a baby boom. Whereas five years ago the utility had 60 births a year, now it has double that number, King said.

King said she does not expect men to push for job sharing or part-time work, but she does see men, as well as women, pressing for working at home and flexible working conditions. She added, however, that she sees these trends not just as a matter of family needs, but as quality-of-work issues.

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DWP has a pilot telecommuting program in which four women are doing customer service work out of their homes.

King said she sees men getting "more and more concerned about child care," not only for their own needs, but because they are directly affected by absenteeism and tardiness of other workers.

"Child care is a program that affects all of your workers, not just women, because it affects our bottom line," King said, adding that absenteeism is probably at least a third higher among workers with small children than among others. And that problem is only exacerbated if the child care is unreliable, she said.

Thus, with trends for "leaner, meaner organizations," companies are finding that they "can do that better, and can increase productivity, by earmarking child care as an issue."

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DU PONT CO.

Earlier this year, the Du Pont Co. released findings of a study showing that men as well as women are thinking about family in making their career plans. Included among the findings:

- Men comprise nearly half of those who use or plan to use child care.
- More than a fifth of Du Pont employees who use child care, both men and women, said they avoid jobs calling for travel and relocation.
- A quarter of the men, and nearly half the women, said they have thought about leaving Du Pont for another company that might offer more flexibility.
- Employees want increased and more flexible parental leave, professional part-time work, flexible hours, and to be able to work at home.

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The study, Du Pont's second major one on work and family, showed that family concerns are having an increasing impact on men's attitude toward work. A higher percentage of men reported work/family problems in the 1988 study than in the 1985 study, and the gap narrowed between men's and women's feelings about business travel, relocation, and care for sick children, according to Du Pont.

The fact that Du Pont is studying work and family concerns is unusual in that the majority—76 percent—of its 100,000 U.S. employees are men.

"We are not at this point a company driven by demographics" to work on this issue, said Faith Wohl, director of the work force partnering division of Du Pont's employee relations department and co-chair of the company's work and family committee. That's why it was important that the company found these issues to be of paramount importance to men as well as women, Wohl said.

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New Stress For Men

While the stress of being a working parent has always been apparent for the mother, for the father this has only been realized recently. "For men in some ways it's more difficult, because it's new," Wohl said. Fathers today "have a desire to be an active parent, but are troubled by the impact they see on their careers."

"This introduces a different level of stress," Wohl said. "These men are walking in unchartered territory. It's harder for them to deal with this new phenomenon."

As more men are affected by stress, Wohl sees men as well as women being more interested in flexibility in their work environment and less so in business travel and relocation.

And given the realities of today's work force – the overall tightening of the labor market and the increasing numbers of working women – companies are going to have to become more flexible, Wohl said.

As more men are affected by stress, Wohl sees men as well as women being more interested in flexibility in their work environment and less so in business travel and relocation.

Du Pont is working on implementing 23 recommendations that came out its work and family study, one of which, an extension to six months of unpaid parental leave, was just announced several weeks ago. This period can also be used for a gradual re-entry to full-time work, with mother or father working part-time for part of the six months. In any event, full benefits continue throughout.

Prior to this new policy, Du Pont had a two-month parental leave that was instituted in January 1986. According to Wohl, perhaps about a dozen fathers took an average of less than a month off.

Parental Leave Will Increase

"To many men," Wohl said, taking time off to be with a new child "is still a new idea. I'm confident that as time goes on, more fathers will take advantage of it." Indeed, fathers who have taken parental leave "are very positive about it," she said.

Still, Wohl acknowledged that there remains a social stigma to dad taking off time from work to be with baby. She suspects that many

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men at Du Pont, as at other companies, are taking off shorter amounts of time about the birth of a child, but taking it as paid vacation time.

That "doesn't require explanation," she said, and it doesn't mean any loss of income. Du Pont keeps no track of such numbers, but "intuitively, I would think a lot of that is going on," Wohl said.

Prior to 1986, an employee could request up to a year of unpaid leave, but permission had to be negotiated with the supervisor and was contingent on business needs. Under such conditions, it was unlikely that men would put themselves in the position of trying to get parental leave, Wohl said. So in 1986, Du Pont made the two-month unpaid parental leave automatic, making the whole idea "more of a given," Wohl said.

More Flexibility

Just as valuable, or perhaps more so, as the time off is the option to work part time, Wohl said. "Reduced work hours are what many people want," she said.

Now that the leave conditions have been made more flexible, Wohl suspects more fathers will take advantage of them, "but it will be a while before there is wholesale use of it" by men.

With the 1988 survey showing that more than 90 percent of the firm's dual-career families planned to start a family within three years, the company can expect to see "very active use" of parental leave, she said.

Just as valuable, or perhaps more so, as the time off is the option to work part time, Wohl said. "Reduced work hours are what many people want," she said.

While Du Pont has "quite a few" permanent part-time employees, the company, with more than 100 major work sites, does not keep track of those numbers centrally, according to Wohl. Interest is growing in part-time professional jobs, although this seems to be mostly women wanting to cut back for family reasons, she said.

Men Using Flextime

There is increasing use of flextime at Du Pont sites, with both men and women working flexible hours for family, as well as other, reasons.

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"Flexible hours are going to be the way to meet family and personal needs," Wohl said.

Du Pont has had some isolated experience with job sharing, but this is not a widespread practice at the diversified chemical firm, Wohl said.

The firm also is doing some workplace seminars, with parenting seminars drawing a mixed male/female audience, she said.

What's Ahead

What does the future hold? "People have a lot of trouble envisioning what things will be like in five years," Wohl said. "There is a point beyond which companies can't change the fact that it's simply hard" to juggle work and family, she said. "We can make it better, but we can't take away a lot of the stresses."

Moreover, she said, much attention is being paid now to the first five years of life as they relate to work and family demands. "We haven't thought through the whole spectrum."

For example, she said, "What greater stress is there than dealing with the teenage child in a drug crisis?" And then there's the whole problem of latchkey children.

Concluded Wohl: "We're just starting to see the implications of an entire population working."

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APPENDIX

POLICIES FOR FATHERS

CATALYST SURVEY FINDINGS: PATERNITY LEAVES

- **37% of Catalyst's survey participants offered child care leaves to new fathers.**
- **Survey findings and follow-up interviews indicated that very few men take advantage of this option.**
- **Leaves for new fathers are rarely called parental, paternity or child care leaves.**
- **Fully 90% of companies offering leaves of this type designated them "personal leaves" and made no effort to publicize the fact that they were available to new fathers.**

Concern about legal and equity issues has prompted a growing number of companies to provide parental leaves for men. These leaves tend to be comparable in length and benefits to the unpaid leaves offered to women following disability for childbirth. Few fathers, however, apply for parental leave. Men generally absent themselves from work for a day or two when their children are born and describe this time off as vacation, personal days or family crisis leave. There are a number of explanations for this:

1. The availability of child care leaves may not be clearly communicated. Catalyst survey results indicate that companies rarely give leaves for fathers such clearly recognizable names as parental leave or child care leave. Fully 90 percent of companies offering leaves to men categorize them as "personal leaves." As a result, many new fathers don't realize their eligibility for parental leaves.

   In one company, a male employee learned of the option through word of mouth—he was unable to find it in his employee policy manual since it was listed under "emergency leave." "Most of my fellow employees are totally unaware of this benefit," he says. "It should be mentioned specifically in a child care section."

   Another company offering parental leaves to fathers as well as mothers sent special letters to female employees informing them

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of company policy, but sent no such letters to men.

2. **Many men have little understanding of the role they might play as caregivers to a new baby.** A Catalyst focus group conducted in the Midwest provided an interesting glimpse of this phenomenon. When asked if he had considered taking a leave when his son was born, one man replied: "Why should I? How long could I work on the house?"

3. **Men tend to feel that taking a child care leave will have a negative impact on their careers.** Catalyst's findings corroborated men's fears. Although many companies' policies offered leaves to men, management invariably took a dim view of the practice. When asked how much leave time for men was reasonable, 62.8 percent of survey respondents replied "None," while 17.4 percent suggested a maximum of two weeks.

Interviews with human resources professionals revealed company discomfort with—and in many instances, disapproval of—the notion of men taking parental leaves. As a human resources manager at a major Southern manufacturing company put it, "If a man requested a leave for this purpose, his career would take a dive." A Midwestern manufacturing firm with a long-standing paternity leave policy has witnessed slim interest in the idea. "I suppose it's because leaves for men aren't culturally acceptable," says the firm's human resources director.

CATALYST SURVEY FINDINGS: CORPORATE ATTITUDES TOWARD PATERNITY LEAVE

One hundred fourteen companies offered unpaid leave to new fathers. Of these 114 companies, 99 answered a subsequent question about the length of unpaid leave considered reasonable for new fathers. Forty-one percent of these companies considered no leave time reasonable for new fathers, although they offered such leaves.

This opinion was borne out by the experience of a male employee at a Northeastern communications company. When he requested the three months of unpaid parental leave spelled out in the firm's policy, he was told that such leaves were intended only for low-

level employees, not for men who wanted to move ahead in their careers.

MEN'S GROWING ROLE IN CHILD CARE

Although men have been slow to avail themselves of extended parental leaves, Catalyst's interviews and focus groups with women across the country indicate that fathers are playing a larger role in day-to-day child care. Men often share responsibility for taking children to doctors' appointments or to and from child care centers or family day care providers. In one focus group, for example, when questioned about the greatest area of conflict in a two-career family, a father replied: "Deciding who's going to stay home when our son is sick."

CHILD CARE LEAVE FOR NEW FATHERS

Larry Lopez, a communications manager at an Eastern communications company, was the first father in his department to apply for the paid emergency child care week that can be used by new fathers. "My wife and I discussed my leave at the same time we discussed hers," Lopez explains. "I did think about taking more than a week but it was a busy period in my job and I was needed in the office."

Lopez notified his supervisor of his intentions two to three months before his wife gave birth. At that time he began planning his workload so he would be prepared to start his leave as soon as she went into labor. His arrangements called for working at home and keeping in touch with the office by phone.

In retrospect, Lopez thinks that a single week was too short and wishes he had supplemented it with some vacation time or unpaid leave. His wife was very tired after the delivery and could have used his help for another week. Lopez's wife is currently expecting another baby. This time he hopes to take a longer leave since managing two youngsters will be that much harder.

Lopez shares child care responsibilities equally with his wife. "We take turns dropping off and picking up our daughter at the sitter's and getting up with her in the middle of the night," he says.

Although some men fear that taking time off when their wives give birth and sharing a substantial amount of child care will have a negative impact on their careers, Lopez disagrees. "My coworkers shared my excitement about my leave and my new role," he says. "And I honestly believe that the whole experience has made me a better manager and a happier person. I handle difficult situations better and I'm easier to work with in a crisis."

In many two-income households, it is no longer taken for granted that the mother is the parent who will stay home when a child falls ill. More parents are dividing up the job by taking alternate or half days off. In some families, the responsibility is determined by which parent has the more urgent reason to be at work that day.

In other Catalyst studies, professional women who are mothers have noted that sharing child care duties with their husbands contributes to their success by allowing them the scheduling flexibility needed for a demanding career. A human resources planner at a leading technological company believes that a woman's work will suffer if she cannot count on this type of sharing. "Women who have total responsibility for their children have a much harder time getting their jobs done," she notes.

MEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENTAL LEAVE

Male responses to paternity leaves will undoubtedly be slow to change. Nevertheless, at least one company reports that younger male employees are beginning to inquire about leave policies. This particular company is not yet ready to provide leaves for new fathers, but is monitoring their interest level.

A new generation of fathers may well display more positive attitudes toward parental leave. It is also possible that companies which discourage such leaves will begin to discover three of their advantages:

- Entitling men to parental leaves may mean that the length of women's leaves can be reduced, and women can return to work with fewer worries about child care.
- The spouse with the higher level of responsibility at work can return to the job promptly while the other remains at home with the baby.
- Many companies invest considerable time and effort in finding and training women employees. As these women rise through the ranks and assume increasing responsibility, the wise policy will be one that encourages men to play a larger domestic role.

These advantages are likely to be most appreciated by companies whose staffs are bolstered by a significant number of married couples. Other companies' policies may be more influenced by the efforts of employees themselves to promote change.

SHARED PARENTAL LEAVES AT&T BELL LABS NEW JERSEY

In 1981, Pam and Dennis Norgaard, both of whom worked for AT&T Bell Laboratories in Whippany, New Jersey, wanted to participate equally in their child's upbringing. Since Pam, at the time a member of the Serving Area Studies Group, was on a two-year rotational assignment from Northwestern Bell, they felt it was important for her to get back to work as soon as possible after their son's birth in August 1981. With this in mind, both spouses decided to take advantage of the AT&T option whereby couples can share parental leave. Pam stayed home from August until October, at which point Dennis, a member of the Loop Systems Planning and Application Department, began a leave of absence that lasted through December. Other parents employed by AT&T Bell Laboratories have worked out similar arrangements to let the spouse with the greater job responsibilities return to work sooner.

(Based on a February 16, 1982 article in *AT&T Bell Labs News*, an in-house publication for employees.)

SWEDEN OFFERS CHILD CARE LEAVES TO NEW MOTHERS AND FATHERS

Under Sweden's current parental insurance policy, new parents are entitled to 12 months leave which can be divided between them. For jobs in the public sector, the first nine months are fully reimbursed, while in the private sector, they are reimbursed 90 percent up to a stipulated maximum. In both the public and private sectors, the final three months are paid for according to a fixed allowance. Parents may use their leave time before childbirth or, if they prefer, take some portion of it later on—perhaps when a child begins school.

Under Swedish policy, if a man chooses to take a leave while his wife works, her leave time is automatically reduced. Thus when fathers take leaves, mothers return to work sooner.

Although Sweden's parental insurance policy would seem to be an ideal option for new fathers, Swedish men have been in no hurry to stay home. Utilization rates have only recently begun to climb and thus far have reached only 25 percent. In addition, a preponderance of the leaves are short.

Continued

According to Dr. Joseph Pleck, the associate director of the Wellesley Center for Research on Women, in *The Father's Role: Applied Perspectives* (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1986) there are a number of reasons why a full 75 percent of Swedish men are reluctant to take parental leaves. They include:

- Lack of motivation.
- Women's unwillingness to share their leave time.
- The fact that husbands tend to be higher wage earners.
- Negative corporate attitudes.

Although Swedish law prohibits sanctions by employers against men who take parental leaves, managerial disapproval is harder to legislate. In 1980, Dr. Philip Hwang of the University of Goteburg, Sweden conducted a survey of 50 fathers who took one month or more of parental leave, and a survey of a small sample of employers, all in Goteburg.

According to Hwang, "A substantial proportion of both fathers and employers reported that employers do in fact view leave-taking fathers negatively and may penalize them in many ways."

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The March 1989 Work & Family Report #15, *The DOL Women's Bureau Work and Family Clearinghouse: An Information Resource for Employers* (BSP 146), describes a federal operation established in January 1989 to provide employers with information on such work and family issues as child care, part-time or emergency care programs, and alternative work schedules.

The April 1989 Work & Family Report #16, *The "Mommy Track" Debate and Beyond: Public Policy? Corporate Reality?* (BSP 156), contains the transcript of a two-hour roundtable discussion on career tracks for women by Felice Schwartz and nine other experts representing corporate, academic, and public interests.

The May 1989 Work & Family Report #17, *Child Day Care in the 101st Congress: Early Initiatives* (BSP 157), features an in-depth comparison of six of the more than 100 bills with child care provisions introduced in the 101st Congress.

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